

oil production. Some of the biggest producing fields in the lower 48 states are located around Taft, fields like Midway-Sunset, Cymric, the Belridge Fields, Buena Vista and Elk Hills. Kern County, California produces more oil than the State of Oklahoma and the people of Taft do much of the work that makes the county so very productive.

The Oildorado celebration Taft holds every five years is one way the community celebrates its link to energy production and lets its hair down—literally, since there is a beard growing contest. People who work hard producing energy get together to celebrate their commitment to a very tough trade. I hope my colleagues will join me in celebrating their pride in their work and in their town with them.

FUNDING FOR PUERTO RICO STATUS OPTIONS

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 17, 2000

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that the House passed FY 2001 Department of Transportation Appropriations bill which included the President's request of \$2.5 million to assist in public education on, and a public choice among, political status options for Puerto Rico. This request was first left out of the FY 2001 Treasury Appropriations bill but the Transportation Conference saw fit to restore this funding request during their negotiations.

Puerto Rico has been a part of the United States for more than a century. Over the course of this period, the Puerto Rican people have participated in our democracy. Their sons and daughters have fought our wars and their political leaders keep issues that affect Puerto Rico on the surface of our political discourse. Most importantly, the richness of their people and culture have become a part of what is good about America.

After gaining U.S. citizenship in 1917 and eventually adopting their own constitution to increase self-government, the people of Puerto Rico have consistently sought to fully express their political desires through self-determination. In the past 30 years, Puerto Rico has held three plebiscites to gauge the people's preference on a future political status.

Because of their current status, Congress is responsible for assisting Puerto Rico in their status efforts. In 1999, the House Resources Committee issued a bipartisan report that concluded Federal action is needed to establish a process for resolving Puerto Rico's status.

Congress has a responsibility to remain objective and work with the people of Puerto Rico about the status choices. We should ensure that any option put before the voters of Puerto Rico is acceptable to Congress and we should also make certain that the Puerto Rican electorate is well-informed and educated on what each option can mean to their future.

The funding made available to the President in the FY 2001 Department of Transportation bill is a good step toward assisting with any future plebiscite in Puerto Rico. Congress must now be truthful with the people of Puerto Rico on what their options are and in assuring

that Congress will stand by those decisions. We must remain mindful that the United States claimed Puerto Rico. There is no "us against them"—they are part of "us." Puerto Rico self-determination will happen and it is our responsibility that within that process we ensure that the residents of Puerto Rico are fully educated on each status option.

TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN TOM BLILEY

SPEECH OF

HON. F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 12, 2000

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to our distinguished colleague, the Chairman of the Commerce Committee, the gentleman from Virginia, Representative TOM BLILEY. TOM BLILEY has served his constituents in Virginia for over 30 years, both on the local and national levels. His dedication to public service has taken him from the Richmond City Council, to the position of Mayor of Richmond, and then to this House where he has risen to chair this body's oldest committee.

Throughout his legislative career, TOM BLILEY has accumulated a list of accomplishments most of us can barely imagine. For the last six years, he has led one of the most successful, efficient, and constructive committees in Congress. He oversaw passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which brought fairness, competition, and increased consumer choice to the industry. He led the charge to override President Clinton's veto of the Contract with America, at the same time overhauling and reforming the nation's securities laws. Finally, TOM BLILEY led the effort needed to pass the Mammography Standard Act of 1998, life-saving legislation that will ensure the quality of many women's lives for years to come.

These are only a few of the legislative accomplishments we attribute to our colleague from Virginia. They illustrate his commitment to sound fiscal principles, a balanced budget, increased opportunities for individuals and small business owners, and common sense government. More importantly, they are among the reasons that TOM BLILEY's constituents know that they can count on him to look after their best interests.

I know I join TOM BLILEY's many friends in Virginia's Seventh Congressional District, as well as his many friends and colleagues here in the House, in wishing him the best in the years to come. He has served us well, and we will all miss the dedication and leadership he brought to his work.

TRIBUTE TO GWEN SESSIONS

HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 17, 2000

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, today, I stand to recognize an outstanding public serv-

ant in my district. She is a woman who has dedicated her life to not only raising her own four children, but also teaching and nurturing many small children in her community. I wish to recognize my good personal friend Gwen Sessions who was recently named Elementary School Teacher of the Year in the Rocklin Unified School District.

As a kindergarten teacher at Antelope Creek Elementary School, Gwen has touched countless lives for good, both directly and indirectly. She has contributed many hours of behind-the-scenes work by participating in numerous district and school site committees. More importantly, she has earned praise from students, parents, and colleagues for her inspirational style of teaching. She sets clear boundaries for the children and reinforces positive behavior through praise. She is also known for maintaining a well organized yet stimulating classroom that is full of color. In fact, one of her fellow teachers has said, "Her room is a learning lab which exudes personal enthusiasm and warmth. She has an ability to motivate students beyond their natural abilities and helps them reach their greatest potential." As a testament to Mrs. Sessions' involved approach to teaching, one parent has said, "It is not uncommon to find Mrs. Sessions with red painted hands, bright colored clothes, and tiny little hands embraced around her."

The first evidence of what Gwen is doing right is found in the fact that she has one of the largest Parent Volunteer programs at the school every year. High school students, parents, and grandparents enjoy volunteering in her classroom because she makes them feel rewarded for helping out.

In addition to getting involved, many parents have also voiced their appreciation for the excellent way in which Gwen Sessions educates their children. Said one student's mother, "It's always scary turning your child over to their first teacher. It didn't take long, however, for our family to learn to completely trust, respect, and appreciate Mrs. Sessions for all her wonderful gifts she has to offer." Remarkd another mother, "The first time I entered Mrs. Sessions kindergarten classroom I know my daughter was in the best hands possible." One parent and long-time instructional aide puts it this way, "I feel her empathy with people and her desire to inspire others has made the difference in countless lives. She puts her heart and soul into her daily task of making the beginnings of our children's many years in school a joy."

As a final and perhaps supreme tribute, another mother has said, "She makes learning exciting and brings even the shyest of children out of their shell. . . . I know we will look back in years to come and say, This teacher made a difference between success and failure."

Congress has made improving education a top priority. As we continue searching for ways to better the educational system, we need to look at the positive things happening in schools across the country. I believe that Gwen Sessions is an excellent example of what is right with America's schools.

To my friend Gwen Sessions, the Rocklin Unified School District Elementary School Teacher of the Year, I say, "Thank you and congratulations on a job well done! Keep up the good work."